Guide

for Charter School Planning and Results Reporting

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For Education Plans 2003/04 – 2005/06 and AERRs, November 2004

Alberta
LEARNING

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What's Changed?

• New vision for Alberta's learning system	Page 5
• A new requirement for Capital Plan Highlights in the plan and Summary of and Capital Plan Results in the AERR consistent with Alberta Infrastructure's new requirement that charter schools prepare three-year Capital Plans.	Pages 8 and 12
• A new requirement for a Communication Plan to support the fulfillment of the charter school's responsibility to inform the education system of effective practices and innovations.	Page 9
• Consolidated the Provincial Goals from 5 to 3	Link 3, Page 16
• Added a new priority for improvement: Improving programs, results and reporting for First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners	Link 4, Page 17
• Added a highlights section to the AERR; this section must include the results on the required provincial measures	Page 11
• Broadened the focus of the Financial Summary from spending to encompass financial health, and dropped the requirement for reporting per student spending	Page 12
• Added a checklist of planning and reporting requirements for reference	Link 1, Pages 13-14

Clarified:

• The linkage of plans to Sections 32 and 35 of the *School Act*	Pages 4-6, 9, 10, 16
• the emphasis of the children's services priority on access to services	Link 4, Page 17
• the Budget Highlights	Page 9
• that strategies should address the educational needs of all students, and charter schools should identify strategies that	Page 8
- meet the needs of students with special needs and circumstances if applicable	
- address charter renewal, if approaching the end of the term of the charter.	
• that summary AERR information provided to the public must include results on the required provincial and charter goal measures	Page 11
• AISI reporting on results, including results of evaluations of the projects reaching the end of their three-year term.	Page 11

I. Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist Alberta's charter school authorities in preparing, updating and reporting on their three-year education plans.

Purpose of Charter School Planning and Results Reporting

Preparing plans and reporting results are essential elements of accountability and of continuous improvement in basic education. These documents assist boards in:

- improving education for ECS-12 students
- identifying student learning priorities
- guiding decision making and budgeting
- addressing provincial directions and local needs, and
- enhancing communication with parents and the public.

Purpose of the Guide

This guide outlines the specific requirements for charter school three-year education plans for 2003/04 to 2005/06 (due May 31, 2003) and annual education results reports on the 2003/04 school year (due November 30, 2004).

In this guide general information on planning and reporting is separated from specific requirements for charter school plans for 2003/04 to 2005/06 and Annual Education Results Reports. The general information is provided in Sections I to IV. Specific provincial requirements are provided in the links in Section V. These are reviewed each year. A new link (Link 1) has been added that lists all requirements for charter school education plans and results reports. Related reference materials are in the Appendices, Section VI.

Checklist of Requirements, Link 1

While the guide is intended for charter schools in Alberta, it can be used by any organization that seeks to plan its goals, measure its progress, make improvements and communicate its achievements, as it is based on good planning and reporting principles.

II. Planning and Reporting Overview

Charter schools have a unique purpose in Alberta's public education system: to provide different and innovative approaches for improving student learning, not only for the benefit of their own students but also for use in other public schools over the long term.

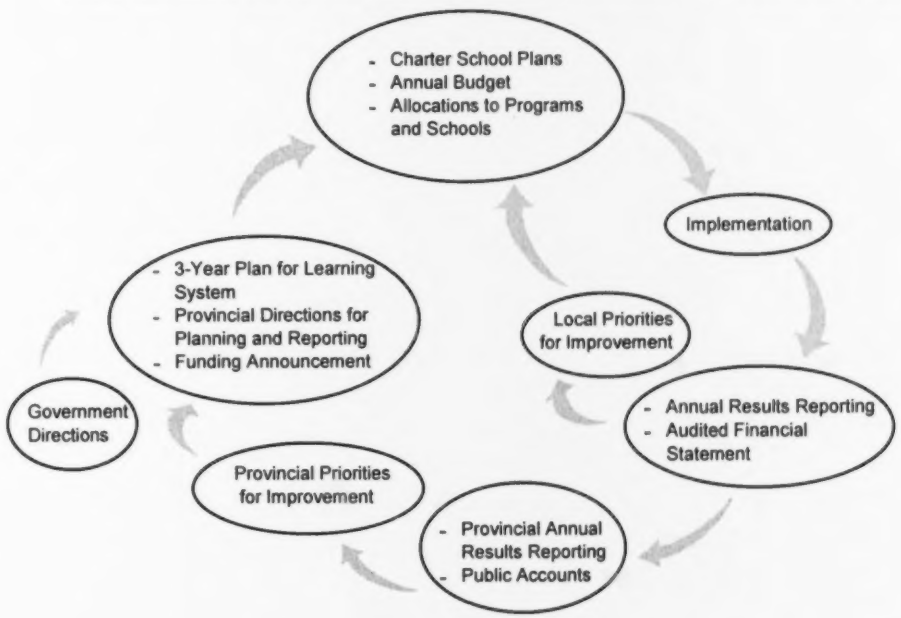
Planning and reporting by charter schools throughout Alberta are carried out within the provincial government's Accountability Framework.

Accountability Framework

The Government's accountability framework consists of an ongoing cycle that enables continuous improvement and critical reflection by:

- setting priorities, measuring progress and using results to continually improve education for students;
- aligning school authority and provincial goals and priorities;
- incorporating provincial direction and community input;
- allocating resources to achieve goals and improve results; and
- communicating with stakeholders (staff, students, parents, school councils, the public, Alberta Learning) and the basic education system overall about charter school plans, effective practices, innovations and results.

Accountability Cycle for Continuous Improvement - Basic Learning System


- Charter School Plans
- Annual Budget
- Allocations to Programs and Schools
Implementation
Local Priorities for Improvement
- Annual Results Reporting
- Audited Financial Statement
- Provincial Annual Results Reporting
- Public Accounts
Provincial Priorities for Improvement
Government Directions
- 3-Year Plan for Learning System
- Provincial Directions for Planning and Reporting
- Funding Announcement

Each level in the Accountability Framework plays a key role.

Government of Alberta – sets overall provincial direction and allocates funding to ministries; monitors and reports on progress, and uses results to plan improvements.

Alberta Learning – prepares the Ministry three-year business plan and guidelines for school authority and post-secondary institution plans based on provincial direction, assesses and reports annually on results and uses results to plan improvements, identifies provincial priorities for improvement, allocates funds to school authorities and post-secondary institutions, defines basic education, reviews school authority and post-secondary plans and results for compliance with provincial requirements to identify implications for provincial level planning.

Charter School Authorities – plan and implement three-year education plans aligned with Ministry direction and school authority focus and purpose; allocate resources to programs; monitor progress; assess and report results annually to stakeholders and use results to plan improvements.

References:

- Legislative Authority, Appendix 1
- Definition of Basic Education, Appendix 2
- Alberta Learning's Three-Year Business Plan for 2003/04 to 2005/06. http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/department/businessplan/

III. Charter School Planning

Charter school authority education plans focus on student learning over a three-year time horizon. Plans are updated annually so that as one year is completed and another is added, the plan continues to roll forward, maintaining a three-year timeframe. This allows the school authority to respond to recent performance results and changes in the operating environment while maintaining continuity from year to year.

Although entirely new plans are rarely prepared, charter school authorities update some components of their plan on an annual basis, such as strategies and priorities. Every few years, other components such as the vision, mission and beliefs should be revisited and refreshed (e.g., at the renewal of a charter school's charter). In particular, the revisions to the *School Act* enacted by the Legislature in fall, 2001, and the revised *Charter School Handbook* (December, 2002), provide charter schools the opportunity to ensure their charters and all elements of their education plans for 2003/04 to 2005/06 are aligned with provincial legislation and goals. Additional information on the *School Act* provisions and revised regulations for charter schools is provided on Alberta Learning's website at:

http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/choices.asp

Preparing and Updating Plans

Charter school authorities annually update the three-year education plan for their school based on the principle of continuous improvement, and focusing on improving student learning. This annual update takes into account a number of considerations, including:

- the charter school results;
- input from stakeholders such as school councils, parents and the public;
- resources available;
- Alberta Learning three-year plan and annual results;
- feedback from Alberta Learning or other monitoring authorities if applicable; and
- recommendations arising from charter renewal.

Charter school three-year education plans build on the school's charter agreement and Alberta Learning's vision, mission and goals for the learning system. Charter school authorities adapt goals and outcomes **required** by the province and include in their plans charter mandate goals and outcomes to reflect their unique purpose, characteristics and circumstances.

Communication

Charter school three-year education plans serve as a valuable tool for communicating with staff, school councils, parents and community groups. Charter school authorities have an obligation and use a variety of means to inform parents and other members of their community of their goals, plans, results and priorities for improving education for students, and for the use of resources. Charter schools are **required** to share their effective practices and innovative approaches with the broader education system through such means as Open Houses, presentations at conferences, distribution of documents, etc.

Alberta Learning staff review charter school plans and annual results reports to ensure alignment with provincial goals and priorities for improvement, their charter mandate and to provide input into provincial-level planning for the learning system.

Elements of Education Plans

Each charter school's three-year education plan is built on a three-year timeframe. Listed below are the elements typically found in a good plan. Some of these elements are **required** by Alberta Learning as noted.

Foundation statements, such as vision, mission, principles, and/or beliefs articulate the charter school's purpose. Contextual information, such as a school profile and issues and trends affecting operations, describe the planning environment. Alberta Learning **requires** charter school education plans to include charter and provincial goals and related measurable outcomes, performance measures, local targets and strategies, and to address provincial priorities for improvement. As well, budget highlights are **required** to be included in the plan.

These elements of education planning, taken together, combine to form a three-year plan that enables the charter school and stakeholders to know where the charter school is going, how it plans to get there, how it will measure progress and what resources it will use along the way. The plan acknowledges the charter school's role in Alberta's learning system, adapted to the context of the charter school. Required elements are labeled.

Foundation Statements

These elements of a plan succinctly present the charter school's aims and values.

Vision [required]

A vision looks to the future. It describes a set of ideal circumstances that charter schools strive to achieve. These ideals focus on student achievements and the programs or services that maximize student learning. The vision in a charter school's plan should be consistent with the vision in its charter agreement. The charter school vision also should be consistent with Alberta Learning's new vision for the provincial learning system:

> The best learning system in the world.

Mission [required]

A mission statement is a clear, concise description of the charter school's overall purpose and role. It gives direction to the programs and services that the school provides for its students. The mission in a charter school's plan should be consistent with the mission statement in its charter agreement and include a description of the students for whom the school is intended (Section 35 of the *School Act*). As well, the charter school mission should be consistent with Alberta Learning's mission:

> Alberta Learning, through its leadership and work with stakeholders, ensures that learners are prepared for lifelong learning, work and citizenship so they are able to contribute to a democratic, knowledge-based and prosperous society.

Principles and/or Beliefs [required if new charter or first plan after charter renewal]

Alberta Learning has established principles for the learning system: learner-centred, accessible, collaborative, accountable, responsive, innovative and equitable. These would be reflected in the charter school board's statements as well as their own organizational beliefs. The charter board's principles or belief statements guide decision-making and provide a foundation for developing its mission, vision and goals.

Contextual Information

This information succinctly describes the charter school's context and operating environment.

Profile

A profile is a brief description of the charter school that gives context for the plan and describes characteristics of the community, students, program and location.

Trends and Issues (required if new charter or first plan after charter renewal)

Trends and issues help charter schools identify opportunities and challenges that may impact planning, budgeting, providing programs and achieving results. A trend shows a direction of results over time (e.g., enrolment growth). An issue is a condition that may affect the charter board's ability to fulfill its mandate or to achieve its goals.

Goals, Outcomes, Priorities, Measures and Targets

These elements of the three-year education plan are aligned with provincial goals, priorities for improvement, outcomes, measures and priorities, and also address the charter school's purpose and circumstances.

Goals [required]

Goals are broad statements that look towards the long term and steer organizations in the direction of realizing their vision. Goals are typically expressed as desired conditions or aims as well as address school purposes, needs and circumstances. Charter school authorities **must** include the primary goal(s) and measurable outcomes related to the particular teaching philosophy, vision and purpose on which their charter is based as well as reflect Alberta Learning's goals that guide the direction of the learning system overall.

Outcomes [required]

Outcomes are measurable statements of what charter schools seek to achieve. In broad terms, they answer the question: "What will this look like when we get to where we want to be?" Plans include the **required** provincial outcomes and outcomes for charter goals. The outcomes must reflect the charter school's unique purpose as well as improved results for students. Each goal **requires** at least one measurable outcome.

Required Goals and Outcomes for Charter School Plans, Link 3

Priority Areas for Improvement [required]

Priority areas for improvement reflect school and province-wide priorities that require immediate, concerted attention. Reviewing annual performance results is an important basis for selecting priorities in areas where results do not meet expectations. Selecting and addressing priorities for improvement are essential aspects of the accountability cycle for continuous improvement in Alberta's basic learning system. Charter school plans are **required** to include strategies and measures for provincial and local priorities for improvement. To assist school authorities, Alberta Learning is working to improve information on aboriginal student achievement.

Required Provincial Priorities for Improvement, Link 4

The provincial measures for the provincial priorities for improvement are included in Appendix 3 for reference. The required measures are labeled.

Reference

Provincial Results for Measures for the Provincial Priority Areas for Improvement, Appendix 3

Performance Measures and Targets [required]

Performance measures are the assessment tools that charter school authorities use to track how far along they are in achieving the outcomes in their plan. Three-year education plans include at least one measure for each outcome; conversely, one measure can address more than one outcome. Measures are quantitative, are expressed as "numbers of" (in relation to a total) or "percentages of", and are reported over time.

Charter school authorities list in their three-year education plans the measures they will use to assess and report their results, as well as past results for these measures, if available. These measures include the **required** provincial measures (where applicable to their role/mandate), and locally determined measures for provincial and charter school priorities for improvement, and for the unique outcomes emanating from their charter. Previous measures can be revised or replaced if not practical or if better measures have been developed.

Targets are strategic tools to help charter school authorities focus on maintaining or improving results. Targets show desired levels of performance to be attained by a certain time. Locally developed targets are **required** for student results on provincial achievement tests for each year of the plan (for charter schools with elementary and junior high programs) and for measures related to the charter school's mandate, goals and outcomes.

Required Performance Measures and Targets for Charter School Plans, Link 5

References

Performance Measurement, Appendix 4
Setting Local Targets for Student Achievement, Appendix 5
Conducting Surveys, Appendix 6

Strategies [required]

Strategies are actions that charter schools take to achieve goals and desired outcomes that meet the needs of all their students. Charter schools are **required** to develop strategies for each goal to achieve outcomes, to reflect the specific purpose and mandate of the charter school and to address provincial and school priorities for improvement. The strategies also reflect the implementation of programs and initiatives such as Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI), technology plans (including ICT), Student Health, First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) education, Early Literacy, English as a Second Language, and programs and services for students with special needs (if applicable). If the end of the term of the charter is approaching, plans should include strategies leading to charter renewal. In addition, strategies address school circumstances and opportunities.

Highlights of Capital Plan [new requirement]

Alberta Infrastructure supports charter school facility needs by assisting charter schools find suitable space as well as providing funding for leasing space and for upgrading leased space. In respect of this responsibility, Alberta Infrastructure has instituted a requirement that charter schools submit Capital Plans that contain information on their facility needs for the next three years. As these capital plans reflect the charter school's program and the educational needs of students in charter schools, Alberta Learning **requires** that charter schools include a summary of their capital plans in their three-year education plans.

The Capital Plan Highlights section of the charter school plan presents a clear, concise summary for parents and the public the charter school's facility requirements for the next three years. These highlights **must:**

- include the educational purpose and benefits to students (rationale) of the charter school's Capital Plan, such as enrolment growth, enrolment shift (e.g., elementary to secondary), need for physical upgrades or specialized space (e.g., laboratories);
- be based on the Capital Plan submitted to Alberta Infrastructure for the corresponding three years; and
- contain information on how readers can obtain more information about the charter school's Capital Plan.

Budget Highlights [required]

This section presents highlights from the charter school board's budget for the first year of the three-year plan in a way that is easily understood by and meaningful to the public. This section may refer to budgeted changes in enrolment, certificated and uncertificated staff, programs, funding, revenues and expenses, annual surpluses/deficits and accumulated surpluses, focusing on anticipated material changes from the current year. The highlights can provide contextual information such as the guiding principles the board uses in financial planning.

Budget Highlights **must:**

- provide the public with key financial information about the upcoming school year
- clearly present summarized information from the Budget Report in charts or tables for the primary audience – parents and other members of the community
- indicate where and how readers can obtain detailed information about the school's budget

Communication Plan [new requirement]

Charter schools have an obligation to share their effective practices and innovative approaches for the benefit of Alberta's education system as a whole. To support accomplishing this responsibility, charter school plans **must** include a Communication Plan that outlines how the school will carry out this obligation.

The elements of good communication plan include: objectives, audiences, key messages, action plan (specific communication strategies) with timelines.

Note: If the communication plan cannot be developed by the three-year plan deadline, indicate in the plan when the communication plan will be available and submit it separately.

IV. Charter School Results Reporting

Charter school authorities assess and report annually on the school's progress and achievements and use the results information to identify improvements to address in the next update of their plan. Every few years charter school authorities may wish to undertake a major retrospective by assessing accomplishments and results over a longer span of time (e.g., approaching the end of the term of the charter or in preparation for applying to renew their charter).

Results Reporting

Each year charter school authorities report on the progress of their three-year education plans through an Annual Education Results Report (AERR). The performance measures results are the primary tool that charter school authorities use to inform their planning and continually improve education for their students. The results provide information on areas where performance is strong and identify areas that need improvement. In short, the results information allows charter school authorities to practice results-based decision-making.

The annual results report also informs stakeholders where the charter school authority is in relation to where it wants to be. It demonstrates that the charter school authority is accountable for student achievement and for the wise use of resources to provide quality programs for students and to address improvement priorities.

Communication

AERRs provide charter school authorities the opportunity to summarize their accomplishments in addition to reporting on performance measures.

AERRs are public documents. Charter school authorities communicate results to parents, the public education system and the larger community through a variety of methods such as the full AERR, the school report card, newspaper inserts, brochures, community meetings, etc.

In keeping with their unique role in Alberta's learning system to implement innovative approaches to student learning that can be used to improve education for students throughout the province, charter school authorities are **required** to share their effective practices and results with Alberta's public education system and the Ministry of Learning.

Publication and notification requirements, Link 2

Alberta Learning staff review charter school authority AERRs to ensure alignment with provincial goals and to provide input into provincial-level planning for the learning system.

Elements of Annual Education Results Reports

The Annual Education Results Report (AERR) provides information on the charter school authority's major activities and achievements of the past year, with a focus on results for students – both over time and in relation to targets established in the education plan. Listed below are the elements typically found in a charter school results report. Those elements required by Alberta Learning are labeled.

Highlights [new requirement]

This section briefly highlights the charter school authority's results and accomplishments for the last year in the context of their charter school's mandate and **must** highlight the results of **required** provincial and charter goal measures.

Summary of Accomplishments

This information highlights the charter school authority's progress and accomplishments in implementing the three-year education plan, including programs and initiatives such as AISI, Student Health, First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) education, Early Literacy, English as a Second Language, information and communications technology, as well as programs and services for children with special needs (if applicable).

Charter schools are **required** to summarize their effective practices and innovations and how these have been shared more broadly throughout Alberta's education system.

Charter school authorities are **required** to report AISI project summaries in the AERR, focusing on results achieved. For projects that have reached the end of their three-year term, this information must include highlights of the results of the summative evaluation. (See *AISI Administrative Handbook*, pages 15, 16, 28 and 31.) This information could be included in the Summary of Accomplishments, or in the section that reports Performance Measure Results (below).

Performance Measures Results [required]

Charter school authorities provide results information for the performance measures in the school three-year plan for the **required:**

- provincial measures and priorities for improvement
- local measures and priorities for improvement and assess their progress.

Charter school authorities analyze the results to assess and report on progress. Contextual information can be provided to explain results and describe the environment in which results were achieved. This qualitative information enhances understanding of quantitative results and contributes to the overall assessment of progress and achievement.

Required Charter School Performance Measures for November, 2004 AERR, Link 6

Provincial results for measures related to the provincial priorities for improvement are provided in Appendix 3 for reference. If charter schools use corresponding local measures, they can report their performance in relation to the provincial results. The **required** measures are labeled.

Provincial Results for Measures for the Provincial Priority Areas for Improvement, Appendix 3

Future Challenges [required]

Charter school authorities briefly describe their major education issues and priorities for the charter school for the next few years, including priorities for improvement identified from the assessment of results. This section also discusses emerging trends, issues and opportunities that have implications for the charter school.

Summary of Capital Plan Results [new requirement]

Charter schools highlight for parents and the public the results achieved in implementing their Capital Plan for the school year from the funds provided by Alberta Infrastructure, focusing on benefits for students.

Financial Summary [required]

In the financial summary, charter school authorities communicate to parents and the public the key messages arising from their audited financial statements that reflect their financial health. This information is evaluative of the year' financial results, and includes such information as significant changes over the prior year, the annual operating surplus/deficit, accumulated operating surplus, and capital reserves.

The section **must:**

- Provide the reader with key financial information about the previous school year, including the financial position of the school,
- Include information in table and/or graph format for the primary audience – parents and other members of the community, and
- Indicate where and how readers can access the school's audited financial statements.

V. Links

The links list specific requirements for charter school authority three-year education plans and Annual Education Results Reports (AERRs).

Link 1

Checklist of Requirements of Charter School Education Plans and Results Reports

Note: For charter schools that offer programs at specific grade levels, some required provincial performance measures and targets are not applicable. (Examples: For a charter school with only elementary programming, performance measures for diploma examinations and high school completion are not applicable. Conversely, for a charter school with only high school programming, performance measures and targets for provincial achievement tests are not applicable.)

Charter School Education Plans

Include:

- Vision, Mission (page 5)
- Principles and/or Beliefs (page 6), if new or newly renewed charter
- Trends and Issues (page 6), if new charter or newly renewed charter
- Charter School Goals and Outcomes (pages 6, 16).

Reflect the three provincial goals:

- Goal 1: High Quality Learning Opportunities for All
- Goal 2: Excellence in Learner Outcomes
- Goal 3: Highly Responsive and Responsible Charter School

and related outcomes.

Priority Areas for Improvement (pages 7, 17)

Include the Provincial Priorities for Improvement:

- Improving early literacy and numeracy
- Improving children's access to services through co-ordination of services (clarified)
- Improving learning through effective use of information of communication technology
- Improving programs, results and reporting for First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners (new)
- Improving secondary student achievement in mathematics
- Increasing high school completion rates
- Improving community satisfaction with education
- Local priorities for improvement.

For each provincial and local priority:

- Develop strategies (see page 8) and measures (see Appendix 4, pages 26-27)

Performance Measures and Targets (pages 7, 18)

- Percentages of students who achieved the acceptable standard and the percentages who achieved the standard of excellence on provincial achievement tests, based both on those writing and all students in grade, including targets for each year of the plan (for elementary and junior high schools),
- Percentages of students who achieved the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on diploma exams (for high schools),
- Student participation in diploma exam courses (for high schools),
- High school completion as determined by the school (for high schools),
- Measures for provincial and local priorities, and
- Measures for charter school goals.

Strategies (page 8)
Include strategies that meet the needs of all students, including:

- Strategies for each outcome
- Strategies for priority areas for improvement and initiatives

Other

- Highlights of Capital Plan (page 8)
- Budget Highlights (page 9)
- Communication Plan (page 9)

Charter School Annual Education Results Report (pages 11-12)

- Highlights of results, including results on the required measures (Link 6)
- Summary of effective practices and innovations and the communication of these to basic learning system (page 11)
- Summary of AISI project results (page 11)

Reporting and Analysis of Performance Measures (pages 11, 18).

- Report percentages of students writing provincial achievement tests who achieved the acceptable standard (five years of results) in relation to provincial results and targets and charter school targets for 2003/04 (for elementary and junior high schools).
- Report percentages of students writing provincial achievement tests who achieved the standard of excellence in relation to charter school and provincial results and targets for 2003/04 (for elementary and junior high schools).
- Report percentages of all students in grades 3, 6 and 9 (five years of results) who achieved the acceptable standard in relation to charter school targets for 2003/04 and to provincial results and targets (for elementary and junior high schools).
- Report percentages of all students in grades 3, 6 and 9 (five years of results) who achieved the standard of excellence in relation to charter school targets for 2003/04 and to provincial results and targets (for elementary and junior high schools).
- Report percentages of students writing diploma examination who achieve the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence (for high schools).
- Percentages of students in their third year of high school completing diploma examination courses (for high schools).
- Report on high school completion (for high schools).
- Report on all measures included in the charter school plan for 2003/04 to 2005/06, and
- Assess and comment on progress on measures for all provincial and local outcomes and priorities for improvement.

Other

- Future Challenges (page 12)
- Summary of Capital Plan Results (page 12)
- Financial Summary, including a brief overview of jurisdiction financial position (page 12)

Link 2
Publication and Notification Requirements

Three-year education plans and AERRs are **required** to be made available to the parents and the school community. Charter school authorities are encouraged to use a variety of methods to communicate their plans and their achievements to the broader community in fulfilling their responsibility to share effective practices and innovations.

Education Plans

Three-year plans are **required** to be updated by **May 31** of each year and posted on the jurisdiction's website. Charter school authorities notify Alberta Learning of the website posting at: field.services@learning.gov.ab.ca. Alternatively, charter school authorities provide a copy of their plan as an e-mail attachment to the appropriate Field Services zone director.

Results Reports

The charter school authority's AERR is **required** to be prepared and posted on its website by **November 30** of each year. Summary information provided to the public must include the results on **required** provincial and charter goal performance measures in relation to provincial results and/or standards and provincial and school targets. Charter school authorities notify Alberta Learning of the website posting at field.services@learning.gov.ab.ca. Alternatively, charter school authorities provide a copy of their AERR as an e-mail attachment to the appropriate Field Services zone director.

Link 3 Required Goals, Outcomes and Measures for Charter School Plans, 2003/04 to 2005/06

Listed below are the learning system goals, outcomes and performance measures that are **required** to be incorporated in charter school authority three-year plans. In response to stakeholder feedback, Alberta Learning's business plan goals have been consolidated from five to three goals as presented in the table below. The intent of the learning system outcomes have not changed, although some have been clarified. These goals and outcomes are reviewed annually in the Ministry's business planning process, which includes consultation with stakeholders.

The learning system outcomes, which apply across the entire learning system, may be interpreted or adapted by charter schools to reflect their unique mandate, student needs and local circumstances. Charter schools are **required** to develop and implement strategies for these outcomes.

Goals Related to Charter School Mandate/Purpose/Philosophy (Section 35 of The School Act)	
Outcomes (Section 35 of The School Act)	**Measures and Local Targets**
• Outcomes that reflect the particular teaching philosophy, vision or purpose of the school	• Locally determined measures and targets required
• Improved student learning outcomes to be attained by students (or in provincial Goal 2 below)	• Locally determined measures and targets required
Provincial Goal 1: High Quality Learning Opportunities for All	
Outcomes	**Measures and Local Targets**
• The learning system meets the needs of all learners, society, and the economy	• Local measure required and target encouraged
• All Albertans can participate in quality learning.	• Local measure required and target encouraged
• The learning system is affordable.	• Local measure required and target encouraged
• Financial need is not a barrier to learners participating in learning opportunities	• Local measure required and target encouraged
Provincial Goal 2: Excellence in Learner Outcomes	
Outcomes	**Measures and Local Targets**
• Learners demonstrate high standards.	• Provincial Achievement Tests: percentages of students achieving the acceptable standard and percentages achieving the standard of excellence, both for those writing and the cohort (elementary and junior high schools). • Local targets required for each test for each year of the plan.
	• Diploma exams: Percentages of students who achieve the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence (high schools) • Participation in diploma examinations (high schools).
• Learners complete programs.	• High school completion or appropriate adaptation (high schools). • Local target required for 2003/04 for the five-year rate.
• Learners are well prepared for lifelong learning.	• Local measure required and target encouraged
• Learners are well prepared for employment.	• Local measure required and target encouraged
• Learners are well prepared for citizenship.	• Local measure required and target encouraged
Provincial Goal 3: Highly Responsive and Responsible Charter School	
Outcomes	**Measures and Local Targets**
• Improved results through effective working relationships with partners and stakeholders.	• Local measure required and target encouraged
• The charter school authority demonstrates leadership and continuous improvement.	• Local measure required and target encouraged

Link 4
Required Provincial Priorities for Improvement for Charter School Plans, 2003/04 to 2005/06

Priorities for improvement are important outcomes where performance does not meet expectations. Charter school authorities are **required** to develop strategies in their three-year plans to address provincial and local priorities for improvement based on their results and to report results related to the priorities in their Annual Education Results Reports (AERR's).

Listed below are the **required** provincial priorities for improvement for basic education and their relationship to goals. A priority area for First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners has been added. The children's services priority's focus on improving access has been clarified. The other priorities continue from previous years. The priorities are presented in an order generally reflecting progression through school. See Appendix 3 for provincial results for the **required** measures for the early literacy and numeracy, the secondary mathematics and high school completion priorities.

- **Improving early literacy and numeracy**: related to Goals 1 and 2
- **Improving children's access to services through co-ordination of services (clarified)**: related to Goal 1 and Goal 3
- **Improving learning through effective use of information and communication technology**: related to Goals 1 and 2
- **Improving programs, results and reporting for First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners (new)**: related to Goals 1 and 2
- **Improving secondary student achievement in mathematics**: related to Goals 1 and 2
- **Increasing high school completion rates**: related to Goals 1 and 2
- **Improving community satisfaction with education**: related to all goals

Link 5
Required Performance Measures and Targets for Charter School Plans, 2003/04 to 2005/06

The specific student achievement performance measures and targets listed below are **required** to be included in charter school authority three-year plans along with results for the past five years, if available. As well, charter schools include measures for all outcomes in their plans.

Required measures for the outcome: Learners demonstrate high standards in Goal 2 - Excellence in Learner Outcomes.

1. Percentages of students (excluding those in home education programs) who achieved the acceptable standard and percentages who achieved the standard of excellence on provincial achievement tests in Grades 3, 6 and 9 (five years of results), based both on those writing and the cohort (total enrolment in grade) in relation to provincial results and provincial targets (for elementary and junior high schools). Provincial targets for 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 are included in Alberta Learning's business plan for 2003/04 – 2005/06, available online at: http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/department/businessplan/

   Set targets for each year of the plan, (i.e., for 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06).

2. Percentages of students who achieved the acceptable standard and percentages who achieved the standard of excellence on diploma examinations (five years of results) in relation to provincial results (for high schools).

3. Student participation in diploma exam courses (for high schools).

Note: For the measures listed above, Alberta Learning provides school jurisdictions with multi-year reports on student results and participation. Jurisdictions include this information in their plans and use it for setting targets and for developing strategies to improve student programs and results.

Required measure for the outcome: Learners complete programs in Goal 2 – Excellence in Learner Outcomes.

4. High school completion or appropriate adaptation (for high schools).

Link 6
Required Charter School Performance Measures for November 2004 AERR

Listed below are the **required** provincial performance measures to be reported in charter school authority Annual Education Results Reports, November 2004. These measures provide information related to the outcome "students achieve high standards" for the goal Excellence in Learner Achievement in the charter school's three-year plan for 2003/04 to 2005/06.

1. Percentages of students (excluding those in home education programs) who achieved the acceptable standard and percentages who achieved the standard of excellence on provincial achievement tests in grades 3, 6 and 9 (five years of results) based both on those writing and the cohort (total enrolment in grade) in relation to the charter school's targets for 2003/04 as stated in the charter school plan for 2003/04 to 2005/06, and to provincial results and provincial targets (for elementary and junior high schools). Provincial targets for 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 are included in Alberta Learning's business plan for 2003/04 – 2005/06, available online at http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/department/businessplan/.

2. Percentages of students who achieved the acceptable standard and percentages who achieved the standard of excellence on diploma examinations (five years of results) in relation to provincial results (for high schools).

3. Student participation in diploma examination courses (for high schools).

Note: For the measures listed above, Alberta Learning provides multi-year reports by school and school jurisdiction on student achievement and participation on provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations. These reports contain the information to report to the public on the above measures.

4. High school completion (for high schools).

5. As well, charter schools are required to report on all measures and targets in their plans. If data for a measure are not available, state the measure and indicate that data are not available and when the data will be available. If a measure has been revised or replaced, identify the original measure and report results for the revised or replacement measure, and provide a brief explanation for the change.

   See the 2002 edition of the Guide for Charter School Planning and Results Reporting for the required measures for the November 2003 AERR.

VI. Appendix 1
Legislative Authority

The provincial government has developed a comprehensive concept of accountability that expanded the focus from accounting for dollars spent to include accounting for results achieved. Accountability for performance involves developing plans to make best use of resources available, assessing results to determine if expectations are being met, identifying and addressing areas where improvement is needed, and reporting the results to the public.

This expanded concept of accountability, applying to government departments and funded agencies and organizations, was established in legislation in 1995. The *Government Accountability Act* (GAA) requires government departments and school authorities as well as other public agencies to prepare plans and report on results.

The accountability cycle for the basic learning system (*Accountability in Education – Policy Framework*, June 1995) was developed to describe the application of government's comprehensive concept of accountability to the ECS-12 system. This cycle focuses on continuous improvement and on the linkage of school authority plans and reports to each other and to provincial directions for the learning system, as reflected in the School Authority Accountability Policy, 2.1.1 (*Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual*, on-line at:

http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/pol-plan/polregs/toc.asp

A variety of documents essential for school system operations are available on the department's website, such as the three-year business plan for the learning system, the Guide to Education, the Program of Studies, the Standards for Special Education and the Funding Manual. The *Government Accountability Act* and the *School Act* are available on the Queen's Printer website linked from the on-line Policy Manual Table of Contents, or at http://www.gov.ab.ca/qp/index.html.

Alberta Learning's website also provides information to enhance school authority planning and reporting, such as the provincial surveys of parents, high school students and the public, and the summaries of the reviews of school jurisdiction plans and AERRs, which are provided on the Extranet.

Appendix 2
Basic Education in Alberta – The Definition

Ministerial Order No. 004/98

A basic education must provide students with a solid core program including language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Students will be able to meet the provincial graduation requirements and be prepared for entry into the workplace or post-secondary studies. Students will understand personal and community values and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Students will develop the capacity to pursue learning throughout their lives. Students also should have opportunities to learn languages other than English and to attain levels of proficiency and cultural awareness which will help to prepare them for participation in the global economy.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students are expected to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will prepare them for life after high school. A basic education will allow students to:

- Read for information, understanding and enjoyment.
- Write and speak clearly, accurately and appropriately for the context.
- Use mathematics to solve problems in business, science and daily-life situations.
- Understand the physical world, ecology and the diversity of life.
- Understand the scientific method, the nature of science and technology, and their application to daily life.
- Know the history and geography of Canada and have a general understanding of world history and geography.
- Understand Canada's political, social, and economic systems within a global context.
- Respect the cultural diversity and common values of Canada.
- Demonstrate desirable personal characteristics such as respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, caring, loyalty, and commitment to democratic ideals.
- Recognize the importance of personal well-being and appreciate how family and others contribute to that well-being.
- Know the basic requirements of an active, healthful lifestyle.
- Understand and appreciate literature, the arts and the creative process.
- Research an issue thoroughly and evaluate the credibility and reliability of information sources.
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills in problem solving and decision making.
- Demonstrate competence in using information technologies.
- Know how to learn and work independently and as part of a team.
- Manage time and other resources needed to complete a task.
- Demonstrate initiative, leadership, flexibility, and persistence.
- Evaluate their own endeavours and continually strive to improve.
- Have the desire and realize the need for life-long learning.

Standards for Student Learning

The Minister of Education defines acceptable standards and standards of excellence for student achievement in consultation with Albertans. Employers are involved in specifying the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed in the workplace. Schools, school authorities and the Minister of Education assess and report regularly to the public on a range of student learning.

The school's primary responsibility is to ensure that students meet or exceed the provincial standards as reflected in the Student Learning Outcomes (outlined above), the Alberta Programs of Study, provincial achievement tests, diploma examinations and graduation requirements.

Education Delivery

Schools must engage students in a variety of activities that enable them to acquire the expected learnings. Schools have authority to deploy resources and may use any instructional technique acceptable to the community as long as the standards are achieved. Schools, teachers and students are encouraged to take advantage of various delivery options including the use of technology, distance learning and the workplace.

Schools play a supportive role to families and the community in helping students develop desirable personal characteristics and the ability to make ethical decisions. Schools also help students take increasing responsibility for their learning and behaviour, develop a sense of community belonging and acquire a clearer understanding of community values and how these relate to personal values.

Students learn basic, transferable knowledge, skills and attitudes in school. Schools, in co-operation with employers, provide opportunities for students to develop and practice employability skills. The Minister of Education provides credit for off-campus learning that is approved and accepted by the school and the employer. Government works with schools, employers and post-secondary institutions to help young people make a smooth transition to work and further study.

Appendix 3

Provincial Results for Measures for the Provincial Priority Areas for Improvement

Listed below are the results for the provincial performance measures related to the required provincial priority areas for improvement. The provincial achievement test results for grade 3 language arts and mathematics and the results for grade 9 mathematics are the **required** measures for the early literacy and numeracy and the secondary mathematics priorities respectively. The other measures are provided as examples. Charter school authorities identify appropriate measures for these other priorities in their three-year education plans. If the charter school's measures correspond to the provincial measures, their results can be reported in relation to provincial results in their plans and AERRs.

Priority: Improving early literacy and numeracy.

- Percentages of students who achieved the acceptable standard on the grade 3 provincial achievement tests in language arts and mathematics and the percentages who achieved the standard of excellence (**required**).

Grade 3 Language Arts	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Those who wrote					
- Acceptable	86%	89%	91%	89%	90%
- Excellence	15%	16%	19%	17%	16%
Total Enrolment in Grade					
- Acceptable	80%	84%	84%	83%	81%
- Excellence	14%	15%	18%	16%	15%

Grade 3 Mathematics	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Those who wrote					
- Acceptable	81%	85%	88%	88%	89%
- Excellence	21%	25%	28%	25%	29%
Total Enrolment in Grade					
- Acceptable	75%	80%	82%	82%	81%
- Excellence	20%	24%	26%	24%	27%

Priority: Improving coordination of services for children with special needs.

- Percentages of parents of children with severe special needs who are satisfied with services for their child.

1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02
79%	78%	76%	76%	81%

- Percentages of parents of children with severe special needs who agree or strongly agree with the statement: "The people providing services for my child work well together."

1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02
85%	85%	85%	82%	85%

Priority: Improving learning through effective use of information and communication technology.

- Percentages of students and parents who report school helps improve students' computing skills.

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Students	64%	70%	69%	69%	62%
Parents	67%	80%	79%	79%	76%

- Percentages of students and parents who report satisfaction with student access to computers in schools.

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Students	83%	85%	86%	83%
Parents	74%	72%	73%	71%

Priority: Improving secondary student achievement in mathematics*.

- Percentages of students who achieved the acceptable standard on the Grade 9 provincial achievement test in mathematics and the percentages who achieved the standard of excellence (**required**).

Grade 9 Mathematics	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Those who wrote					
- Acceptable	72%	72%	74%	75%	74%
- Excellence	14%	15%	16%	18%	19%
Total Enrolment in Grade					
- Acceptable	64%	64%	67%	66%	65%
- Excellence	13%	14%	14%	16%	17%

* With the phase-in of Pure Mathematics 30 and Applied Mathematics 30, comparable results for grade 12 students in prior years are not available.

Priority: Increasing high school completion rates.

- Percentages of students who completed high school within three and five years of entering Grade 10.

Grade 10 Year	Completion Rates	
	In 3 years	In 5 years
1995/96	62% (1997/98)	72% (1999/00)
1996/97	63% (1998/99)	73% (2000/01)
1997/98	65% (1999/00)	75%* (2001/02)
1998/99	65% (2000/01)	76%* (2002/03)

***Projections.** These projections indicate results likely to be achieved given the three-year completion rates for these groups of grade 10 students and five year completion rates in prior years. The projection for 2002/03 also considers the projected 5-year rate for 2001/02.

Priority: Improving public satisfaction with education.

- Percentages of the public satisfied with the quality of education in schools.

1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
70%	66%	68%	70%	63%

Appendix 4
Performance Measurement

Performance measures in charter school authority plans and results reports provide information on achievement of goals and outcomes for key aspects of the education system and the charter school's mandate. This information is an essential part of accountability that enables the charter school to:

- assess and report on progress over time, what's working well, what needs improvement
- determine priorities for improvement and set improvement targets
- make program and budget decisions to maintain good performance and improve performance in areas requiring improvement.

Measures typically provide quantifiable information on key aspects of education. This information is generated quantitatively through tests and data analysis or through qualitative means, such as observation, interviews, portfolio reviews. Whether quantitative or qualitative, measures demonstrate observable change. To be meaningful, measures information:

- is obtained regularly (e.g., annually);
- is normally expressed in percentages, ratios, or numbers in relation to a total; and
- is reported including results over time.

Types of Performance Measures

- **Outcome measures:** provide information on progress toward desired results in key areas - effectiveness of programs, impacts on clients.
- **Intermediate outcome measures**: For some desired outcomes, results may not be known for several years. In such instances, it is useful to measure intermediate steps – milestones or landmarks - toward the desired outcome.

The measures in school authority plans and results reports focus on outcomes and constitute the core set for assessing and reporting on progress and achievement.

Other types of measures, listed below, are important for managing resources, providing programs and services and reporting contextual information:

- **Output measures**: information on number of clients served and types of services provided.
- **Process measures**: information on activity and efficiency. These measures indicate demand for services and cost per unit of providing service.
- **Input measures**: information on resources allocated to programs, such as funding, personnel, equipment. These measures provide information on cost of providing programs and services.

Characteristics of good performance measures

Good performance measures provide information that is:

- Understandable – clear and sufficient to provide an understanding of the organization or system to staff, community and government
- Valid – meaningful and credible (sound, defensible)
- Relevant and appropriate – timely, related to important aspects
- Reliable – unbiased, error free and verifiable
- Comparable – show change over time and/or among similar organizations
- Discrete – provides information in distinct, non-overlapping categories
- Empowering/Results Oriented – useful for decision making, promote improvement
- Practical – can be reliably assessed with reasonable effort

References:

Alberta Treasury, *Measuring Performance: A Reference Guide*, September 1996. On the internet at http://www.treas.gov.ab.ca/publications/measuring/.

Alberta Auditor General, *Government Accountability*, February, 1997. On the internet at http://www.oag.ab.ca/. Click on the Reading Room.

Appendix 5
Setting Local Targets for Student Achievement

Targets and Planning

A target is a desired level of measurable or observable performance to be attained by a specified time. Targets are an implicit part of any goal. While a school authority's educational goals point out the directions for people's efforts, targets describe in specific terms what will be accomplished by a certain time. This allows staff to assess whether they are heading where they intended to go, and how well they are moving toward their desired outcomes. Assessment of progress in relation to a target may also lead to the recognition that a different target would be more helpful in guiding your school's efforts toward a particular goal. By identifying immediate, reachable outcomes, targets encourage teachers, students, administrators, and their community to believe that distant goals are attainable. In summary then, when setting targets, strive to ensure that they are:

- Achievable;
- Meaningful;
- Challenging, and
- Time Based.

Viewed in this way, targets can be a valuable part of the school authority plan. Your mission, mandate, values and beliefs, and long-range goals all provide a context for setting specific targets. Similarly, past achievement levels are helpful indicators of what specific targets may be most appropriate, in that they provide a starting point (i.e., baseline) from which subsequent measurements can be made. This is why achievement test and diploma examination results, as well as results of various other local assessments, are relevant in target setting.

Local Focus

Quantitative targets for student achievement on the provincial achievement tests are **required** in charter school three-year education plans.

Systematic interpretation of charter school results from provincial achievement tests will reveal where students need more help in order to continue learning successfully. This can be the beginning point for setting school targets for student performance on the tests for the next three years.

School targets should be realistic and achievable, based on past performance. It is possible that school targets would be different from provincial standards. Staff in each school will be able to identify what percentage of their students reasonably can be expected to achieve the provincial standard in a particular test within the time specified in the targets. An important part of this decision is agreeing on how financial and human resources can support the targets.

Tips for Setting Local Targets

- Consider past and desired participation rates in achievement tests.
- Prioritize to focus on areas needing improvement. For example, emphasize subjects needing improvement in student performance are across grades. It may be reasonable to set "hold the line" targets to maintain current levels of performance in other areas temporarily while directing attention to the selected areas.
- Set targets in relation to other targets. It is important to ensure that achievement of one target does not jeopardize the achievement of another. For example, student participation rates for achievement tests should not decrease because of a desire to improve school or authority results.
- Work collaboratively across grades in a school. Students' performance on an achievement test reflects their learning over the years. Teachers in all grades can contribute important insights and assistance in setting targets.
- Use the school reports on achievement test results to identify what aspects of a subject or course need attention, and use this information to plan targets.
- Emphasize what students need, in order to succeed, rather than focusing on problems that keep students from achieving at the levels expected provincially.
- Expect to set different targets in different grades and subjects/courses, depending on past results and current priorities and resources.
- Interpret targets to students and parents so that they are part of the school-wide effort to achieve targets.
- Report to students and parents on student achievement in relation to targets.

Targets in Perspective

Provincial tests, though providing a common standard and important information about students' learning, are only one of many measures for evaluating the effectiveness of schools and school authorities. Charter school authorities may find it helpful to set targets for other indicators of student achievement, and for areas other than student achievement. Examples include:

- completion of programs
- satisfaction reported by students or parents
- involvement of parents or others from the community in schools
- student involvement in the community or in extra curricular activities.

These other targets can either be quantitative (e.g., "by 2004, 80% of students") or qualitative (e.g., "improve…" or "maintain…").

Through its targets, each school, together with parents and members of the community, can highlight priorities that exist locally for a given year and commit to achieving certain results. Insofar as target setting complements other strategies for improving student learning, your targets are likely to contribute to student learning and to the overall effectiveness of schooling in your community.

Appendix 6
Conducting Surveys

Some local measures may require surveys of parents, students, staff and other community members.

To be manageable, surveys can be done on a random sampling basis or rotated among stakeholder groups over a three-year period.

If school authorities use the same questions as are used in Alberta Learning's annual surveys of a stratified random sample of parents, students and the public, results can be considered in relation to provincial results. The questions asked in the Ministry's surveys of students, parents and the public are available on the Internet at http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/planning.asp.

While surveys do not have to be done annually, the latest available survey information should be reported in the AERR each year along with trend data (information on the same questions from surveys done in previous years), if available.

The Alberta Auditor General's Office has prepared a resource on conducting surveys for the Alberta public sector: *Client Satisfaction Surveys*, October 1998. This document is available on the internet http://www.oag.ab.ca. Click on "The Reading Room."

Two resources were prepared for the Ministry in 1995 to provide guidance to school authorities on conducting satisfaction surveys:

- Environics West, *Pilot Project Report:* This report compares two methods of conducting surveys of parents, teachers and students: telephone interviews and mailed, self-administered questionnaires. The report is available on the internet at http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/satisfaction/PilotProjectReport.pdf.

- Environics West, *Interviewing Manual: Telephone Satisfaction Surveys.* This manual provides advice on selecting samples and conducting telephone surveys. It is available on the internet at http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/satisfaction/Interviewing_Manual.pdf